

Laura A. Athens
Attorney and Mediator, PLC
Farmington Hills, MI
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Employment

Mediator, Arbitrator and Facilitator

1995 to present

Attorney and Counselor

1994 - 2019

Special Education Hearing Officer

1995 - 2006

Vocational Rehabilitation Hearing Officer and Mediator

2002 - 2011

Adjunct Professor

Wayne State University Law School
Taught Education Law, Health Law and Bioethics
1993, 1994, 2001, 2003

Visiting Assistant Professor

Washington University School of Law
Taught Legal Research and Writing
1989 - 1992

Adjunct Professor

Washington University School of Law
Taught Legal Research and Writing
1987 - 1989

Federal Judicial Clerk

For the Honorable John F. Nangle, Chief Judge
United States District Court of Eastern Missouri
1987 - 1989

Education

J.D. Washington University School of Law 1987
Order of the Coif
M.S.S.W. University of Wisconsin 1980
B.A. University of Michigan 1978,
Magna Cum Laude, Honors in Psychology

Practice Areas

- School Law
- Special Education
- Student Discipline
- University Faculty Grievance
- Employment/Workplace conflict
- Civil Rights
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Arbitrator Automotive Class Action Settlement
- Guardianship
- Arbitrator/guardian ad litem

Publications

The Role of Restorative Practices in Effectively Addressing Gender Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace, Legal Daily News, January 2020

Facilitating Positive Change in the Workplace, Legal Daily News, November 2018

The New Emergency Seclusion and Restraint Statute and the Role of the Mediator, Legal Daily News, August 2017

Bullying and Harassment in the Schools: The Prevalence, Parameters and Proactive Solutions, Laches, January 2016

Overcoming Reluctance to Engage in Mediation, Oakland County Legal News, March 2014

Confidentiality Does not Automatically Extend to Pre-Mediation Resolution Sessions, Laches, May 2010

Creating Parameters for Arbitration, Laches, May 2009

ADR in Special Education Matters Benefits Parents, School Districts, Michigan Lawyers Weekly, October 2008

Arbitration: Have It Your Way: Customizing the Dispute Resolution Process to Your Unique Needs, PREMI Newsletter, September 2008

Alternative Dispute Resolution in Special Education, Laches, May 2005

Maintaining Balance in the World of Law Practice, Laches, May 2003

Is the Wall Between Church and State Crumbling? United States Supreme Court Upholds School Vouchers Primarily Benefiting Religious Schools in Zellman v. Simmons, Harris, Michigan Bar Journal, September 2002

Special Protections for Students with Disabilities, Laches, March 2001

A Victory for Employees with Disabilities: SSDI Benefits Do Not Preclude Employment Discrimination Claims under the ADA, 79 Michigan Bar Journal 830, July 2000

Come to the "Inn", Laches, March 2000

Mediation of Special Education Disputes, Laches, February 1999

Solo Networking, Laches, August 1998

Mediation: An Option to Consider, Laches, October 1997

The Case for Specialization, Laches, October 1996

Adapting the Judicial Approach to Medical Malpractice Claims Against Physicians to Reflect Medicare Cost Containment Measures, 62 University of Colorado Law Rev. 287 (1991)

Recent Development, The Urgent Need for Surrogate Motherhood Legislation, 65 Washington University Law Quarterly 488 (1987)

Comment, Constitutionality of Limitations on Attorneys' Fees in Medical Malpractice Actions, 64 Washington University Law Quarterly 635 (1986)

Presentations and Appearances

Student Rights in Special Education and Disciplinary Matters, Keynote Speaker at Centria Clinical Summit, October 2018

Seclusion and Restraint, Guest on "Practical Law" Bloomfield Community Television program, August 2018

A Walk through the IEP from a Legal Perspective, Autism Alliance of Michigan annual conference, April 2015

Education Law and Special Needs Children, Guest on "Practical Law" Bloomfield Community Television program, April 2015

Michigan's New Business Courts, moderator for judicial panel for seminar sponsored by Professional Resolution Experts of Michigan (PREMi), September 2014

Mediating Bullying and Harassment Disputes in the School Setting, teleseminar sponsored by the State Bar of Michigan Alternative Dispute (ADR) Section, August 2014

Legal Rights of Students with Disabilities: Innovative Strategies and Approaches to Resolving Disputes, UM Investing in Ability at the Ann Arbor District Library, October 2013

The School Social Worker's Role: A Proactive Approach to Special Education Issues, presentation to the Michigan Association of School Social Workers for Wayne RESA Professional Development Day, November 2012

Working with Diverse Populations and DisABILITIES, Panel Member, seminar sponsored by Southeast Michigan Career Development Facilitator Association at Oakland Schools, May 2012

Representing the Children, Roles and Responsibilities of a Juvenile GAL, Panel Member at seminar sponsored by Oakland County Bar Association, October 2011

Special Education Mediation: A Proactive Approach to Resolving School Conflict, Guest on "Texas Conflict Coach" radio program, August 2011

Bully and Harassment in the Schools, Guest on "Practical Law" Bloomfield Community Television program, June 2011

Managing School, Related Conflicts, presented at Advanced Negotiation and Dispute Resolution Institute (ANDRI) sponsored by Institute for Continuing Legal Education and Michigan Autism Partnership, March 2011

Special Education and Alternative Dispute Resolution, Guest Lecturer, University of Detroit College of Law, November 2009

Special Protections for Students with Disabilities, Guest on "Practical Law" cable television program, April 2009

Conflict Resolution in the School Setting, PREMi training provided to Lake Orion Community Schools, August 2008

School Law, Guest on "Due Process" television program, February 2008

Selected Special Education Topics, presented to Ann Arbor FACES at Washtenaw Intermediate School District, May 2008

School Law Discipline Issues, presented to Michigan Network for Youth and Families at State Bar of Michigan, March 2007

Extended School Year Programs and Services, presented to Everyone Together Macomb County, January 2006

IDEA in a Nutshell, presented to Autism Society of America, Oakland County Chapter, March 2005

The Special Education Mandate for Inclusion, presented to Everyone Together Oakland County, November 2004

Extended School Year, presented to Washtenaw County Parent Advisory Committee, May 2004

Alternative Dispute Resolution: Everyone wins with ADR in Special Education, sponsored by CHADD of Eastern Wayne and Macomb Counties, March 2004

Alternative Dispute Resolution, panel presentation at State-of-the-Law Day, sponsored by Standard Federal Wealth Management, September 2003

Demystifying Education Law: Special Education and the Due Process Hearing, sponsored by the Student Advocacy Center and Young Lawyers Section of the Washtenaw County Bar Association, September 2003

Real Law for Real People, panel presentation to the Administrative Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan, May 2003

Transitioning to Kindergarten, presented at The Village Educational Center, March 2003

Use of Alternative Dispute Resolution in Special Education Matters, presented to Oakland County Bar Association Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee, December 2002

IDEA and Section 504, sponsored by CHADD of Eastern Wayne and Macomb Counties, November 2002

A Teacher's Role in Special Education under IDEA and Section 504, Wayne State University Council for Exceptional Children, June 2002

Student Discipline, sponsored by Lorman Education Services, April 2002

Special Education Law, Guest Lecturer, Thomas M. Cooley Law School, Education Law course, March 2002

Discipline of Special Needs Students in Michigan, sponsored by Lorman Education Services and Presented to Jackson County Intermediate School District, December 2001

Special Education Law in Michigan: Transition Services, sponsored by Professional Development Network, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 2001

A Teacher's Role in Special Education under IDEA and Section 504, presented to Eastern Michigan University Graduate Students, May 2001

Special Considerations for Students with Asperger's, Pervasive Developmental Delay and High Functioning Autism, Fourth Annual Conference of The Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA), in Washington D.C., co-presented with Sally Bloch-Rosen, Ph.D. , March 2001

New Administrators Workshop II, panel presentation to Michigan Council of Administrators of Special Education, subdivision of Council for Exceptional Children, February 2001

Extended School Year, Grosse Pointe Public Schools Special Education Advisory Committee, November 2000

Special Education under IDEA and Section 504, Friends of Different Learners, Birmingham Public Schools, November 2000

Special Education Issues, presented to the Mental Disability Law Committee of State Bar of Michigan, January 2000

Alternative Dispute Resolution, addressed Michigan Supreme Court during public administrative hearings on the proposed Michigan Court Rules regarding Alternative Dispute Resolution, January 2000

Legal Advocacy in the Schools, sponsored by CHADD of Eastern Wayne and Macomb Counties, November 1999

Special Education School Placement, presented to Autism Society of America, Oakland County Chapter, August 1999

Case Management Special Populations School Age Children with Disabilities, Guest Lecturer, Detroit College of Business, March 1999

Detroit Public Schools Special Education Seminar, presented to Special Education Supervisors, August 1998

Legal Rights of Children with Disabilities, Guest on "Practical Law" cable television program, May 1998

Special Education Law, Disability Rights Conference sponsored by Michigan Protection and Advocacy Services, October 1997

Alternative Dispute Resolution, Guest Panelist on "Due Process" television program, March 1997

Conflict Resolution Workshop for Special Education Administrators, Supervisors, Teachers, School Principals, Parents and Advocates, presented to Oakland Schools, January 1997

Head Start and IDEA, sponsored by Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency Head Start Program, November 1996

The Americans with Disabilities Act and You, presented to Brain Injury Association of Michigan, April 1996

Special Education Law, Annual Guest Lecturer, Wayne State University Law School, 1994-1999

Professional Licenses and Affiliations

- State Bar of Michigan, 1993
- The Missouri Bar, 1987
- United States District Court for Eastern Michigan, 1996
- United States District Court for Western Michigan, 2000
- Board of Social Work, Master's Social Worker
- State Bar of Michigan, Alternative Dispute Resolution Section, Council Member, 2007-2013
- State Bar of Michigan, Character & Fitness, District I Committee, 2007-2009
- Oakland County Bar Association
 - Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee, Chair 2004-05
 - Solo and Small Firm Committee, Chair 1998-99

- Inn of Court 1997-2003
- Oakland County Circuit Court Bench/Bar Conference 1998, 2000, 2007
- Teachers, Lawyers and Children Program 1996-97
- Professional Resolution Experts of Michigan (PREMi) 2007-present
- Autism Alliance of Michigan, Board of Trustees 2012-present
- Association for Conflict Resolution, Michigan Southeast Chapter 2007-2013
- Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services Magistrate Referent Group 2003